



compost

City of Asheville
Sanitation Division
828-251-1122

ashevillenc.gov/sanitation

More info?
www.p2pays.org/compost

Recycling Center Locations
675 Merrimon Avenue
116 North Woodfin Avenue
Transfer Station on
Hominy Creek Road
Buncombe County Landfill



Backyard Composting

Feed the Landscape, Not the Landfill

What is compost?

Compost is a rich soil amendment that you can make from yard and kitchen wastes in a matter of weeks or months. It's fun and it makes use of wastes that would otherwise go into the landfill. When added to the garden, compost conditions our heavy North Carolina clay soil so that plants grow better and faster.

What makes up compost?

Compost is made up of a mixture of 'green' or nitrogen containing material and 'brown' or carbon containing material. The key to a healthy compost pile is to keep a balanced mixture of the two. It is best to start with a 3:1 carbon to nitrogen ratio, but watch your pile closely and make any needed adjustments to this ratio. Your compost should turn a rich, dark brown and have an earthy smell.

Much of your kitchen waste can be composted. Although all food waste can technically be composted, it is recommended that some kitchen waste not be added to your pile because it breaks down very slowly and attracts vermin and maggots. Pet feces and kitty litter should not be added because it may transmit disease. This diagram of a compost pile shows there should be a mix of green and brown material.

Green - (grass clippings, kitchen scraps)
Brown - (leaves, wood chips, shredded paper)
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How to compost

You can compost in a variety of ways. Just make sure you select a convenient and well-drained location to compost. Consider each of the following options and choose the one that works best for you.





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Troubleshooting

Symptom	Problem & Solution
Compost has a bad odor.	Not enough air or too wet. Turn the pile, add more brown material.
Compost is damp and warm in the middle, but nowhere else.	Pile is too small. Collect more material and mix the old ingredients into a new pile.
The heap is damp and sweet smelling, but still will not heat up.	Lack of nitrogen. Mix in more green material.



Do Compost	DO NOT Compost
bread	butter
coffee grounds & tea leaves	bones
fruit & vegetable wastes	cheese and sour cream
egg shells	fish scraps and meats
grass clippings	lard
leaves	oils
sawdust, wood ash & wood chips	mayonnaise
sod	peanut butter
straw	pet wastes
shredded paper or cardboard	salad dressing

Composting pile

Plan on making your pile 4 feet high, wide and long. Start with a base of brown material, and alternate layers of green and brown material as you add to the pile. The smaller the particles in the compost heap, the faster the particles will decompose. Chopping or shredding the wastes you put into the compost heap will also help speed the process. Water each layer of the pile until it is the consistency of a wrung out sponge. Within three or four days, the center of the pile should become hot to the touch. Turn the pile every four days to provide even heating and ventilation.

Composting tumbler

Tumblers are barrels or containers mounted on a frame that can be turned by hand. These speed up the composting process and make turning a pile very easy. However, the amount of compost produced is limited by the container. Start with brown material, and add alternating

layers of green and brown material. Turn the pile frequently; the more often it is turned, the quicker the material will decompose.

Holding Unit

This type of composter is the 'typical' backyard composter, one that holds materials until composting is complete. Start by adding brown material and alternate layers of green and brown material as you add to the pile. Turn the pile frequently to speed the decomposition process, and keep the pile moist by watering each layer as you go. This is the slowest composting method listed.

Do-It-Yourself

It is easy to make your own compost unit from inexpensive materials such as wooden pallets, stakes and chicken wire. To find out how to make your own composter, visit the NC Cooperative Extension's website at the www.ces.ncsu.edu.

Using Compost

Compost improves your soil and helps retain water. Use it in flower and vegetable gardens, around trees and shrubs, and on house plants and lawns. Mix finished compost into soil when preparing for planting. Compost can be applied in a layer on top of the soil and worked in as a soil amendment, or can be put directly in planting holes or mixed with potting soil.